

July 22, 2016

Dr. James T. Strong  
Office of the Provost  
California State University Stanislaus  
One University Circle  
Turlock, California 95383



Dear Dr. Strong:

Thank you for California State University Stanislaus's interest in the Excellence in Assessment Designation! We received applications from campuses of all types and sizes and each received rigorous and personal review by higher education assessment experts from throughout the country. We regret to inform you that your campus's application for the EIA Designation was not successful this year.

We will NOT be releasing a list of all campuses that applied for the EIA Designation; only those campuses who receive the designation will be included in the public announcement, which will occur on August 22, 2016. While we are alerting you to this decision now, this information is EMBARGOED until August 22, 2016. You may share this information with key personnel on your campus, but please do NOT share it broadly on campus or publicly until August 22, 2016.

The Excellence in Assessment (EIA) program recognizes exemplary colleges and universities that successfully integrate assessment practices across campus, provide evidence of student learning outcomes to stakeholders, and utilize assessment results to guide institutional decision-making and improve student performance. Ten institutions working to implement and sustain comprehensive use of assessment of student learning outcomes have been selected to receive the designation for our inaugural year.

Like the Carnegie Community Engagement Classification, the EIA Designation provides a systematic and nationally recognized evaluation of colleges and universities intended to reveal best practices in campus-wide assessment. EIA recognizes institutions for their efforts in intentional integration of campus-level student learning outcomes assessment, from classroom assessment to institution-level assessment reported for transparency and accountability. The designation is directly built from the [NILOA Transparency Framework](#), and is the first national program designed to recognize institutions engaging in intentional campus-wide assessment.

We believe that campus-level assessment is a continuously evolving process designed to improve student learning no matter how advanced institutional assessment practice may be. Therefore all campuses that applied for an EIA Designation are being provided with feedback from the reviewers who scored the applications. The feedback for Stanislaus State, along with resources that may be useful in developing plans to take action from it, is provided below.

**Feedback from EIA Reviewers based on California State University Stanislaus's EIA Application:**

- Overall, reviewers indicated that California State University Stanislaus needed to do more to develop a consistent and coherent conceptual framework to guide their activities. While there are indications that the institution is

making progress in their efforts through pilots, expansion of engagement, and development of plans, much remains to be explored. It is not clear yet as to whether the process of assessment is compliance driven versus informing improvement of student learning.

- Reviewers were concerned that the campus may be underestimating the challenges they will face in creating a coordinated and communicative plan and/or unnecessarily complicating things instead of focusing consideration on the core building blocks they will need to have in place. Creation of a sustainable plan for assessment that incorporates the views and voices of faculty, administration, student affairs, students and other stakeholders requires a strong foundation.
- Reviewers noted that there may be an over-reliance on technology as a "silver bullet" to solve all problems and would encourage more attention be paid to professional development and Center for Teaching and Learning resources to support faculty and staff.
- Recent examples of use of evidence are needed (example provided was from 2003), as well as follow up on whether changes implemented were effective.
- The Principles of Assessment may serve as a point of convergence for efforts as would the communication plan development and additional space for constituents to make meaning of assessment.
- Of particular interest may be the chapters in the enclosed NILOA book (*Using Evidence of Student Learning to Improve Higher Education*) on involvement of different stakeholders, communication, organization, and use of results. In addition, there are coaches available through NILOA to assist institutions in thinking through forward movement.
- Possible resources to examine to help advance the efforts underway include the [Roadmap](#) report which can be informative regarding the various groups to involve in the process. Further, four occasional papers, on [closing the loop](#) and [using results](#), one on [alignment](#), and another on [student affairs](#) might be useful in framing the work moving forward. And finally the [report on meaningful implementation](#) of assessment process could serve as a guide to inform and advance efforts underway.

We are happy to share a hard copy of the NILOA book, *Using Evidence of Student Learning to Improve Higher Education*. We hope it serves as a resource in alignment with your current efforts and helps to reinforce your movement forward. Additionally, we recommend you connect with other campuses working to improve their assessment processes at AAC&U's upcoming [meetings and events](#), specifically the [2017 General Education and Assessment: Design Thinking for Student Learning](#) conference in Phoenix, AZ in February.

If you have any questions or feedback about the EIA Designations, please contact Teri Lyn Hinds ([thinds@aplu.org](mailto:thinds@aplu.org)), VSA Project Manager, who is leading and coordinating the program.

We were gratified to see such an enthusiastic response to the inaugural year of the Excellence in Assessment Designation. In the true spirit of assessment, we will be examining all aspects of the EIA process, submission guidelines and rubric to enhance the experience for future applicants and the evaluation and recognition of the promising work that is being exhibited on the diverse campuses across the country. Thank you for your good work and continuing dedication to improved student learning.

Sincerely,



Christine M. Keller, Ph.D.  
Executive Director, Voluntary  
System of Accountability



Natasha Jankowski, Ph.D.  
Associate Director, National  
Institute for Learning Outcomes  
Assessment (NILOA)



Terrel Rhodes, Ph.D.  
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Cc: Ms. Erin Littlepage (by email & hard copy w/ book)